



March 22, 2010

**It is an honor and a privilege to serve as your United States Senator. Thank you for subscribing to my weekly email update - a brief summary of some of the more notable events during the last seven days. I hope you'll find this useful and informative. You can also follow my regular updates from Florida and Washington via You Tube, Twitter and Facebook.**



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### **HEALTH CARE UPDATE**

Sunday night, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the massive health care bill that carries a trillion dollar price tag, cuts Medicare by \$500 billion, raises \$500 billion in new taxes, and requires every American to purchase health insurance or face a penalty to be collected by the IRS. Unfortunately, this health care bill will now be signed into law.

Now the Senate is being asked to approve a number of so-called "fixes" to the health care bill through a legislative procedure called reconciliation. The changes suggested will make a bad bill worse by adding more tax increases, cutting more from Medicare, and forcing more people into the broken Medicaid system.

The reconciliation bill seeks \$50 billion in additional tax increases, it doubles the tax on health insurers, and raises additional taxes and fees on drug makers and medical devices. It also seeks to triple the penalty on small business owners who cannot afford to provide their workers with health coverage, meaning employers might face a \$2,000 per person fine.

The so-called fixes offered through the reconciliation process cut Medicare Advantage programs by \$60 billion bringing the total cuts to the program to \$200 billion. The total Medicare cuts add up to \$523 billion. Unfortunately, all of that money will fund new entitlement programs instead of being used to make Medicare secure for our seniors.

## **YOUR VIEWS ARE HEARD**

Thank you to the [nearly 2,000](#) Floridians who participated in my recent survey on the health care debate. It is important to hear from all sides on an issue and I appreciate those who took the time to share their views. [Click here to see the results.](#)

Overwhelmingly, people wanted Congress to scrap the massive health care proposal and start over with a step-by-step approach. People believe the most important issues in the debate centered on reducing health care costs and eliminating waste, fraud and abuse already in the system.

I will continue pursuing passage of my bill, S.2128, which is an effort to stop waste, fraud and abuse in Medicare, capturing an estimated \$20 billion a year. I will also continue fighting to protect health care for seniors and finding ways to make quality health care accessible to all Americans.

At the end of the day, I am disappointed in how this health care debate was handled in Washington. Something affecting every American and one-sixth of our economy should be handled in a transparent, inclusive and bipartisan way. This was a flawed process and not the way Americans want lawmakers to carry out their jobs.

## **MYTHS IN THE HEALTH CARE DEBATE: PART II**

Last week on the Senate floor I discussed several myths in the health care debate. According to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, the current health care legislation will cost nearly \$1 trillion over 10 years. It is important to

benefits won't start for at least four years. In other words, it will take 10 years of new taxes to pay for six years of potential benefits. Click the video below to hear more about the bill.



The bill cuts Medicare by half a trillion dollars, it raises half a trillion dollars in new taxes, and fails to include the \$371 billion dollars the President believes it will cost to fix the Medicare physician payment system.

[Click here](#) to examine the myths in this health care debate for yourself.

### **PRESERVING NASA'S MANNED SPACEFLIGHT MISSION**

The future of NASA is critically important to Florida and our nation. For all NASA's successes, much remains to explore and learn. Unfortunately, NASA is already in the process of terminating the Constellation program - the endeavor to continue manned moon missions after the retirement of the space shuttle program. What's more, spending cuts to this program could result in the loss of 7,000 highly skilled jobs at Florida's Kennedy Space Center.

That is why I have introduced an amendment to the FAA Reauthorization bill that reiterates federal law prohibiting NASA from using funds in FY2010 to cancel Constellation contracts.



My effort sends the clear message that there are no loopholes, exclusions, or other routes NASA can use to kill the program. The ultimate determination on the future of the space program rests with Congress, not a budget proposal submitted by the administration.

### **UPCOMING JOBS EVENTS**

[Employability Fair - Miami](#) Tuesday, March 23, 2010

[Small Business Export Expo - Orlando](#) Wednesday, March 24, 2010

[Growing Your Business Workshop - Hillsborough County](#)  
Thursday, March 25, 2010

### **CUBAN REGIME CONTINUES VIOLATING BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS**

One of the great success stories of the past century is the advancement of democracy and political freedoms across Latin America. Yet Cuba's dictatorship continues to isolate its people from the hope that freedom brings.

Last week, a group of 30 peaceful demonstrators representing the Ladies in White were reportedly detained by Cuban authorities. The Ladies in White were protesting the regime's continued imprisonment of peaceful political activists. It

increasingly desperate, as the people of Cuba courageously demand respect for basic human rights and the immediate release of political prisoners.

We must continue to stand with the Cuban people as they stand up for their liberty. Instead of offering the brutal dictatorship unilateral concessions, it is the time to demand the Cuban regime free its political prisoners and protect basic human rights of all Cubans.

I have asked the U.S. State Department and the White House to work vigorously with our friends in the international community to see that the Cuban regime addresses these humanitarian demands and is held accountable for their blatant violations of even the most basic human rights. The Cuban people have suffered for far too long.

### **CASEWORK CORNER**

One of my primary goals is to make sure Floridians are well served by Federal agencies. From time to time, I will share accounts of how our office has helped a Floridian.

Recently a constituent contacted our office to check on the status of a First-Time Homebuyers Tax Credit application. He had purchased a home in 2009 and filed an amended tax return. When the constituent called the Internal Revenue Service to follow up he was advised that his return was still under review. Frustrated, he contacted our office for assistance.

A member of my staff contacted the IRS and was advised that the agency was awaiting additional information from the constituent. We promptly notified the constituent and provided contact information for an IRS representative from the Taxpayer Advocate Service to help him with this process. Upon speaking with the IRS representative, the constituent submitted the additional information and received the \$8,000.00 First-Time Homebuyers Tax Credit.

If you are experiencing a problem with a federal agency, please contact our Orlando Regional Office by calling (407) 254-2573 to speak with a member of the Casework Department. The toll-free number for Florida residents is (866) 630-7106. To find out more about how my office can help you, go to <http://lemieux.senate.gov> or stop by one of our scheduled Community Office Hours in your area.